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AUTHOR Mosser, John W.
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ABSTRACT

Preparation for employment beyond the academic training colleges provide is an area of essential skills most students need to develop. This study sought to determine student perceptions of the factors that were significant in their preparation for on-campus interviews and of the helpfulness of the Northern Illinois University's Career Planning and Placement Center (CPPC) services they received. Student subjects (N=46) who were selected by recruiting organizations to interview filled out a questionnaire assessing background data, career preparation services used, preparedness for interviewing, and suggestions for improving placement center services. Results implied the following: (1) students who had used CPPC felt it had a positive effect on their feeling of preparedness for interviewing; (2) resume workshops were perceived as helpful, but students may not have been able to apply the concepts taught; (3) the CPPC interviewing techniques workshop was perceived as an effective aid; (4) counseling by CPPC appeared to be responsive to student needs; (5) students using five or more CPPC services appeared to feel better prepared for interviews than those who did not; (6) no association between grade point average and level of CPPC use was found; (7) students with at least one previous on-campus interview appeared to perceive themselves as better prepared because of the experience gained; and (8) factors other than direct services of CPPC appeared to influence students' perceptions of preparation for interviews. (The questionnaire is appended.) (ABL)

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Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois 60115-2859

Career Planning and
Placement Center
210 Swen Parson Hall—North
815 753 1641

An Evaluative Research Study:

Perceptions of Preparedness of NIU Students' For On-Campus Interviewing and the Factors Identified as Significant in their Preparation

Phase One of a Two Phase Study

CG 021240

by
John Wayne Mosser
February, 1985

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ABSTRACT

Preparation for employment beyond the academic training colleges and universities provide is an area of essential skills most students need to develop. One problem of this study was to determine student perceptions of the factors that were significant in their preparation for on-campus interviews. A second problem was to determine student perceptions of the helpfulness of the NIU Career Planning and Placement Center services they received in their preparation for on-campus interviews.

A study questionnaire consisting of four parts was developed. Information gathered from the survey included: background data, number and type of career preparation services used, degree of helpfulness services provided, overall preparedness for interviewing, and suggestions to improve placement center services. Undergraduate and graduate students were encouraged to complete a study questionnaire immediately following an on-campus interview. Forty-six questionnaires were completed from a sample population of 250 for a return rate of 18.5 percent.

Eight hypotheses were identified to measure student perceptions relating to the effect of placement center services. These services include: resume writing and interviewing techniques workshops; career couseling; the effect of student GPA on the number of services used; impact of previous interviewing experience; and indentification of factors other than placement center services that were responsible for preparedness for on-

campus interviews.

Responses of NIU students who have completed at least one on-campus interview point to the following implications:

1. Students that have used services of the Career Planning and Placement Center found them to have a positive effect on their feelings of preparedness for their on-campus interview(s).

2. Students attending a resume planning and writing workshop may perceive it as helpful, but may not be able to apply the concepts taught.

3. The CPPC Interviewing Techniques Workshop appears to be perceived as an effective aid in preparing students for on-campus interviews.

4. The counseling which CPPC is providing to students appears to be helpful and responsive to student needs.

5. Students using five or more CPPC services appear to feel better prepared for employment interviews in general than those who did not.

6. On the basis of this study, there is no association between student GPA and the level of placement center services students use.

7. Students who have had at least one previous on-campus interview appear to perceive themselves as better prepared for their present on-campus interview because of the experience they gained.

8. Factors other than the direct services of the CPPC appear to be an influence on students' perceptions of preparation for their on-campus interviews.

Introduction

The Placement Bureau at Northern Illinois University was created in 1931. From its inception up until the early 1970s, the primary function of this department was that of a "middle-man" or employment agency. The undergraduate catalog from 1963-64 describes the service as "routinely serving bachelor candidates by preparing credentials, referring vacancies, and arranging interviews with prospective employers."[1]

In the early 1970s, consistent with a national trend, NIU changed the name of this department to The Career Planning and Placement Center (CPPC). Along with the name change came a restructuring of the role and functions of the department. "The focus of this restructuring has been to expand the role of the center (department) from that of an employment broker to one of an important resource closely aligned with the educational mission of the institution, especially in assisting students to relate their experiences at NIU... to the selection of and preparation for their career as well as implementing career plans through employment."[2]

In 1981, following a study conducted by the Division of Student Affairs, it was determined that the Career Planning and Placement Center would structure their service mix toward activities that would assist students in defining and implementing their career plans.[3]

The mission statement of the Career Planning and Placement

Center is to serve as "The primary centralized student service agency responsible for providing:

1) counseling and assistance to NIU students in developing and confirming career and employment plans;

2) counseling and assistance to job candidates (NIU students and alumni) in preparing for and securing employment;

3) a communications link between the university community, employers, and job candidates."[4]

Specific services of CPPC currently include:

1. Individual counseling for job related matters. Counseling is available on an appointment and walk-in basis.

2. Workshops on job search preparation topics such as:

   a. resume planning and writing
   b. orientation to campus interviewing
   c. interviewing techniques
   d. second interviews
   e. how to get a job (job search strategies)

3. On-campus employment interviewing

4. Career resource center with career reference materials, employer literature, and job search periodicals

5. Annual job hunters guide. A step-by-step workbook on resume preparation

6. Resume critique service. CPPC counselors assist students in developing career objectives, phrasing, layout, and design of resumes.

7. Alumni resume referral service

8. Internship information

9. Information about part-time off-campus employment

10. Two weekly job vacancy bulletins. Education Vacancies and Business, Government, and Human Services Vacancies.

11. Credential service for education and non-educational majors

Topic To Be Studied

This study will measure the perceptions of preparedness of NIU students for on-campus employment interviewing and the factors identified as significant in their preparation or lack of preparation. Specifically this study attempts to evaluate student perceptions of the effect of CPPC services in preparing students for on-campus employment interviews. Students who have participated in at least one on-campus interview were contacted to complete a study questionnaire immediately following their campus interviews.

Importance of the Topic

Kuh identifies that evaluation of programs and personnel in student affairs is necessary to insure that students are provided satisfactory services.[5]

The acting director of the Career Planning and Placement Center (CPPC) has identified student opinion of current CPPC services and the on-campus interviewing program as useful and needed information. The center's campus recruitment coordinator has also identified the need for student evaluation of on-campus interviewing preparation services offered by the CPPC .[6] In a needs assessment study of The Division of Student Affairs conducted by the NIU Public Opinion Laboratory in March 1984, of the 800 students surveyed, nearly 600 planned to use services of the Career Planning and Placement Center.[7]

Slick, in a 1967 study of "student perceptions of their career development needs," found that 60% of students surveyed at Penn State University wanted to develop skills in interviewing; 57% wanted to develop skills in resume writing.[8] Both of these skills are necessary for success in employment interviews.

In a 1983 study of 691 public and private college and university career planning and placement offices, Scott found 95 percent of all schools provided campus interviewing and placement of full-time employment.[9] These figures seem to indicate that the on-campus interviewing process is a major service of most career planning and placement centers in higher education institutions across the country. In the same study of 691 schools, directors of career planning and placement offices were asked to indicate whether specific criteria existed by which the performance of their office was evaluated. Only 29.5% of these directors indicated that such criteria existed. Scott points out that, "many career planning and placement officers are making subjective judgments affecting their programs based solely on feelings, impressions, or personal bias." He continues, "more formal evaluative data are required for objective decision making."[10]

No previous study has been done on student perceptions of CPPC interviewing preparation services at NIU. This study will provide evaluative data and information for objective decision making.

Scott concludes, "...evaluative studies of any career planning and placement function are both appropriate and professionally responsible."[11]

Because of the lack of data nationwide and at NIU on establishing criteria for evaluating on-campus interviewing preparation services, this topic is worthy of study.

Definition of Terms

This study deals with the perceptions of NIU students relating to factors that may have helped them to prepare for on-campus interviews. Before proceeding further, terms to be used throughout the study will be defined.

Career Preparation Services

For the purposes of this study "Career Preparation Services" shall be defined as CPPC services which include:

a. Counseling on job related matters

b. Workshops on:
   1. resume planning and writing
   2. orientation to campus interviewing
   3. interviewing techniques
   4. second interviews

c. Resume critique service

d. Job hunters guide and resume planning handouts

e. Career resource materials including employer literature, job search guides, and career related periodicals.

The aggregate of these services shall be referred to as the career preparation services program.

Crib Sheet - CRIB is an acronym which stands for Campus Recruiting Information Blank. a CRIB sheet provides specific details on positions employers are seeking to fill when they come to NIU to interview students.

Recruiting - The term "recruiting" refers to any organization interviewing students for the purpose of exploring the compatibility of joining their organizations. "Recruiting" and "interviewing" may sometimes be used interchangeably in this study.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were designed to assess the extent to which students perceive the services of the Career Planning and Placement Center as having helped to prepare them for on-campus interviewing. The hypotheses tested were formulated based upon related literature about selection interviews, informal program goals, and rival factors that may have influenced respondents' preparation.

Primary Hypothesis #1

Students who have used services of the Career Planning and Placement Center will identify those services as having a positive effect on their feelings of preparedness for their on-campus interview(s).

Rationale: It is important to establish that students believe that CPPC services are aiding them in preparation for the interview process. If students don't believe this, student participation in CPPC programming may decline and/or result in the development of negative attitudes among the student body toward CPPC.

Measurement: Responses to Likert scale question #7 in Section II will be reported. This question addresses perceptions of helpfulness of CPPC services in general. Responses to questions #1-9 in Section III will also be reported. These questions will identify specific CPPC services used and student perception of the degree of helpfulness they provided.

To accept this hypothesis at least 70% of responses to question # 7 (Section II) shall respond in the "strongly agree" or "agree" category and, responses to questions #1-9 (Section III) shall respond in the "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" category in at least 70% of cases for all services used. The author was unable to locate specific standards from any related research to determine an appropriate level of acceptance or rejection for this hypothesis. CPPC program managers did not express a desire that the test of this hypothesis be proven at any stated level. Seventy percent was selected as the standard for acceptance by the author so that the outcome measure would clearly be above the level that would have occured through pure chance.

Hypothesis #2

Students attending the CPPC Resume Planning and Writing Workshop feel they had an effective resume for their on-campus interview.

Rationale: This hypothesis will measure the students' perceptions of the value of information gained from CPPC in helping them prepare an effective resume for on-campus interviews. It is important to see if there is a correlation between students using those services and students who felt they had an effective resume for their interview.

Measurement: Responses to Likert scale question #5 in Section II will be reported. This question measures perceptions of effectiveness of the student's resume for the on-campus

interview. Responses to question #8 in Section III will be reported. These questions identify whether the resume writing workshop was used. To accept this hypothesis at least 75% of those students using the resume writing workshop must have responded in the "strongly agree" or "agree" category to question #5 in Section II. Again, due to the lack of specific standards from related literature, a self-constructed measure was developed by the author. The hypothesis was built on the assumption that student participation in a resume writing workshop will influence student perception of their ability to have an effective resume for on-campus interviews. Although this assumption may not be irrefutibly substantiated, the strength of the standards imposed upon this hypothesis were rigid.

Hypothesis #3

The CPPC Interviewing Techniques Workshop is an effective aid in preparing students for their on-campus interview(s).

Rationale: There is broad based support among researchers that the interview is the most widely used method for selecting employees. The Interviewing Techniques Workshop of CPPC addresses the verbal and non-verbal behaviors which research has identified as significant in interview situations. Galassi found that, "A number of researchers (Drake et al., 1972; Grant & Bray, 1969; Harkness E. Madole, 1974) consider communication skills and interpersonal skill as the single most important set of factors in the interview." [12]

Questions in Section I #6 have been identified by Dunnette

and Bass in their 1963 study as most often asked in employment interviews.[13] These are covered in handouts provided in the Interviewing Techniques Workshop and typically in the workshop presentation as well.

Relative to non-verbal behavior in interviews Wagner 1949 reported "the interviewer makes an evaluation...as early as the first four minutes of an interview." He continues, "after interviewers form an initial impression they selectively seek out and perceive information consistent with their initial impression."[14] This is clear support for making a good first impression in an interview. Drake et al. also substantiated these findings in a 1972 study.[15]

Tschirgi in a 1972 study of 70 business firms found personal appearance to be ranked as important as prior work experience in importance to employers as a hiring factor.[16]

Lastly, Imada and Hakel (1977) identified eye contact as a key non-verbal behavior in influencing interview outcomes. "This study has a major implication. The results suggest that it would be useful to train prospective job applicants to concentrate on non-verbal behaviors in creating a favorable first impression in the interview."[17]

According to informal CPPC standards for workshops, these verbal and nonverbal behaviors should have been addressed in the interviewing techniques workshop.

Measurement: Responses to question #7 in Section III will indicate attendance at the Interviewing Techniques Workshop. Respones to Likert scale questions #1, 2, 4, 8, 9 in Section II

will measure student perception of their ability to exhibit important nonverbal and verbal behaviors in their interview. To accept this hypothesis 70% of those students attending the Interviewing Techniques Workshop must respond in the "strongly agree" or "agree" categories in questions #1, 2, 4, 8, 9 from Section II.

Because interviews vary so greatly, responses to question #6 in Section I will not be included as a standard for measurement of this hypothesis. Similar to hypothesis two, the standards for this hypothesis were self-built measures because of the lack of specific related literature. This hypothesis was also built upon the assumption that student participation in an interviewing techniques workshop influenced student perception of his/her ability to exhibit verbal and non-verbal behaviors determined to be important in interviewing.

Hypothesis #4

Counselors of the CPPC are providing counseling that is helpful and responsive to student clients.

Rationale: One of the most essential elements of measuring student perceptions of CPPC services is the helpfulness or usefulness of contacts with the counselors. This is a measure of face value validity.

Measurement: Question # 3 of Section III will measure use and student perception of the helpfulness of career counseling they received. To accept this hypothesis 75% of respondents

indicating meetings with a counselor will respond in the "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" category. Hypothesis number four was measured through a self-built measure. Seventy-five percent was selected as the standard for acceptance by the author so that the outcome measure would clearly be above the level that would have occured through pure chance.

Hypothesis #5

The more of the nine CPPC services (listed in the study questionnaire) used the better prepared students will feel for employment interviews in general.

Rationale: This hypothesis will test for a correlation between the level of services used and student perceptions of their ability to successfully interview and acquire full-time employment. This hypothesis is based on the program objective to "teach students skills to develop job search strategy, secure employment, and maintain a career."

Measurement: Responses to question #3 of Section IV will measure student perception of preparedness for employment interviews in general. Questions #1-10 Section III will measure the number of CPPC services used. The number of services used (Section III) was crosstabulated with the student perception of preparedness for employment interview situations in general (question #3). To accept this hypothesis students using five or more services must answer "very prepared" or "prepared" to question #3 from Section IV in 75% of the cases, and proportionally fewer students who use fewer than five services

must have answered "very prepared" or "prepared."

Hypothesis #6

Student GPA will have no effect on the number of CPPC services used.

Rationale: Students' understanding in academic coursework may have no relationship to their ability to demonstrate and conduct job search skills.

Measurement: Responses to question #6 in section IV will identify student GPA. Responses to questions #1-10 in Section III will identify the number of CPPC services used. The responses to these two questions were correlated. To accept this hypothesis, a Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficent was calculated to determine whether there was an association between student grade point average and the number of CPPC services used.

Rival Hypotheses

Hypothesis #7

Students who have had one or more previous on-campus interview(s) will perceive themselves as better prepared for their present on-campus interview because of the maturation effect.

Rationale: The experience of going through the interview process can be a valuable training exercise. Like most things in life, the more a skill is practiced the better one becomes at it. This hypothesis is included to rule out the influence of this

maturation effect from the factors students identify as significant in their preparation for their interview.

Measurement: Fixed choice response question #3 in Section I will identify if students have had previous on-campus interviews. Question #2 in Section IV will measure student perception of their preparation for their present on-campus interview. Responses to these two questions will be crosstabulated. To reject this hypothesis, students interviewing for the first time will have to respond in the "very well prepared" or "prepared" categories in at least 75% of the time. Due to a lack of specifically related literature, a self-built measure was designed to test this hypothesis. Seventy-five percent was chosen as the standard for acceptance so the outcome measure would clearly be above the level that would have occured through pure chance.

Hypothesis #8

Factors other than the direct services of the CPPC were responsible for students' perceptions of preparedness for their on-campus interview.

Rationale: This rival hypothesis is included to rule out the influence of factors other than CPPC that may have helped students to prepare for on-campus interviewing.

Measurement: Responses to question #11 in section II will identify students who feel factors other than services of CPPC helped them to prepare for on-campus interviews. To accept this hypothesis at least 50% of the respondents must respond in the

"strongly agree" or "agree" categories. CPPC services are not offered to students in isolation. That is, students receive career information from many sources (e.g., the classroom, family, friends, and present or previous employers.) Fifty percent was selected as the standard for acceptance to establish that sources of career information other than from CPPC has gotten to students. Results from open-ended question #10 section I and question #12 in Section II were included to provide qualitative support.

Limitations of the Study

This study attempts only to identify the perceptions of NIU students' regarding the factors that were significant in their preparation for on-campus employment interviews. The study in no way attempts to evaluate the entire scope of the campus interviewing program or the services of the Career Planning and Placement Center at Northern Illinois University. An attempt was made only to assess student opinions of the helpfulness of the services they received from CPPC.

For the purpose of this study, only the following items will be directly addressed in relation to the evaluation of the career preparation programs for on-campus interviewing:

1. individual counseling on job related matters

2. workshops on:

    a. orientation to campus interviewing
    b. resume planning and writing
    c. interviewing techniques
    d. second interviews

3. on-campus interviewing program

4. Annual Job Hunters Guide and resume planning handouts

5. career reference materials, employer literature, career related books and periodicals

6. resume critique service.

This study is based upon questionnaire responses of students who have completed at least one on-campus employment interview. No attempt was made to survey students who have used CPPC career preparation services but that have not participated in any on-campus employment interviews.

Another limitation of the study is that the principal researcher is an employee of the program being evaluated. This relationship creates the potential for bias on the part of the evaluator. When an internal evaluation is conducted, questions of external credibility will always be present.

However, Brown cites internal evaluations as "the best option" when the purpose of a program evaluation is to improve a program.[18] This is clearly the context of this study.

Use of student perceptions is an additional limitation of the study. Common to opinion studies in general is the possibility that all respondents were not able or willing to identify their true opinions on some issues and thus were not able to convey as valid a response as might be desired.

Completion of the study questionnaire was totally voluntary. As a result many students were unwilling to make time to fill out a questionnaire. As much as it was feasible during the data collection period of this study (November 12-16, 1984) the evaluator personally solicited participation of students to fill out a questionnaire upon completion of their interview. Other responsibilities made it impossible to be present at all times that interviewing was in progress. As a result not all students received the same encouragement to participate in the study. Additionally, students were requested to fill out only one questionnaire even if they had multiple interviews during the data collection period.

Time was a significant limitation in all stages of this study. Completion of the entire process of phase one of this study from the evaluability assessment through to preparation of findings in a 16 - week time period did not allow for "ideal" conditions to always prevail.

The research design of this study used only an experimental group. The absence of a control group in the study limits the external validity of the results and thus precludes the results from being generalized to any other population or situation.

The factors identified clearly illustrate the fact that this study is not perfect. However, the findings and recommendations may provide information that can be used for objective decision making relating to programs of the Career Planning and Placement Center at NIU.

Study data was collected during the twelfth week of the

semester. Because it was rather late in the term, many students may have already obtained employment and thus, not been included in the sample population. The possibility exists that a substantial number of study respondents would be comprised of students who have been unsuccessful in the interviewing process. However, information obtained will reflect current student opinion and thus provide useful information to guide future, more comprehensive studies.

Respondents to the study were primarily business and computer science majors, the reason simply being 18 of the 24 recruiting organizations included in the study were seeking individuals with education in business disciplines or computer science. As a result the responses collected will reflect predominantly the perceptions of business and computer science majors and not be a representative sample of students from all majors that may be seeking employment through the on-campus interviewing program at NIU.

Methodology and Procedures of the Study

Once the study topic was formalized, a brief evaluability assessment was conducted by the author to determine the overall feasibility of the study.

The decision criteria listed below were partially extracted from an "evaluability assessment checklist" developed by Esseks.[19] These criteria were used to make a determination of whether or not to pursue the study.

1. Is there support and cooperation from program managers to conduct and complete the study? _X_ Yes ___ No

2. Do program managers have particular decisions in mind for which program evaluation information will be useful?
_X_ Yes ___ No

3. Do program managers have defined measurable program objectives?* _X_ Yes ___ No
*program objectives were informal objectives

4. Is there evidence the program personnel have made substantial efforts to achieve the program's objectives?
_X_ Yes ___ No

5. Has the program been in operation long enough for there to be a reasonably good chance that its objectives could be

achieved? _X_ Yes ___ No

6. Are the data sources which you will need for obtaining the evaluation information which program managers want available to you? _X_ Yes ___ No [20]

Also included in the assessment of the study's feasibility was the ability of the author to complete the project within the time constraints of the fall semester. It was determined this was possible.

A review of the related literature was also conducted to determine if enough literature and prior studies existed which would be necessary to support the topic and study questionnaire that would be developed. This review resulted in an ample amount of related material and studies which provided needed resources to make the study possible.

Program Objectives

No formal written objectives presently exist for career preparation services program or the on-campus interviewing program. Through interviews with counselors, center administrators, and the recruiting coordinator conducted in October 1984, the following informal program objectives were identified.

Objectives of Career Preparation Services Program:

1. To teach students the skills necessary to be successful in planning a job search, securing employment, and maintaining employment.

2. To offer a broad range of support services most often required by individuals entering the job market, e.g. resumes, letter writing, interview techniques, etc.

3. To encourage students to exhibit initiative in career confirmation and implementation plans.

Objectives of On-campus Recruiting Program:

1. To offer students an additional avenue to their job search strategy in securing full-time employment.

2. To serve as many students and employers as possible in an efficient and humane manner.

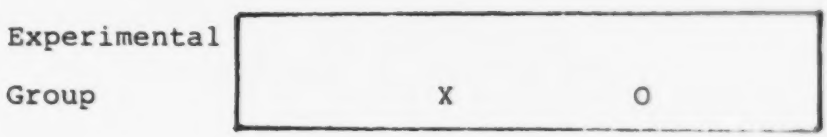
3. To educate students to take initiative for their job search and career management.

4. To aid the transition from student to employee, stressing student responsibility for their own actions.

5. To effectively convey and consolidate information from employers to students about employment opportunities.

Research Design

Phase one of the study uses an experimental group, post-test only research design. The research design is illustrated graphically below.



X = Use of career preparation services and/or on-campus interviewing program

O = Observation of student perceptions through study questionnaire

Phase one data to be analyzed will report percentage and frequency of questionnaire responses. Cross tabulations that relate to study hypotheses will also be reported.

Phase two of the study will be conducted in February or March of 1985. Every effort will be made to select a data collection period that will 1) provide responses of students using the on-campus interviewing program early in the term and 2) provide responses from the broadest range of student

educational majors seeking employment through the on-campus interviewing program.

There is broad - based support among researchers that survey research techniques can provide useful information. As Good has identified, "The questionnaire is the best way to gather personal feelings about situations, programs, and attitudes when personal interviews are impossible because of numbers or distance."[21] Englehart believes, "Data gathered by using a questionnaire can be of considerable value to administrative officers, counselors, and teachers involved in decision-making."[22]

Since this study involves assessing the perceptions of a relatively large number of students, use of a questionnaire was appropriate.

Definition of the Study Population and Sample Size

The population of this study was all students who met the following conditions:

1) NIU student registered for on-campus interviewing program;

2) Student was selected by a recruiting organization to interview;

3) Student signed up for an interview time;

4) The interview was conducted in Swen Parson Hall room 333; and

5) Interview was conducted during the week of November 12-

16, 1984.

During the week of November 12-16, there were 386 interviews which met all of the above conditions.

Students of the study population were allowed to fill out the study questionnaire only one time. Because of this qualification, students who had more than one interview during the data collection period were only counted once. There were 83 students that had more than one interview, which resulted in 136 repeat interviews during the data collection period. This number was subtracted from 386 which resulted in a total study population of 250 students.

Signs were posted in four locations in the interview waiting room (333) in Swen Parson Hall. At irregular intervals throughout the data collection period the author personally solicited students to complete a questionnaire.

Students were asked to complete a study questionnaire immediately following an on-campus interview. A sealed box displaying a sign was located in a prominent location in Swen Parson 333 for collection of completed questionnaires.

At irregular intervals during the same period the recruitment coordinator and student receptionists also solicited student participation in the study.

Forty-six completed questionnaires were returned from the total population of 250. This resulted in a 18.5% rate of return for the study.

Preparation of the Study Questionnaire

A four-section questionnaire using open - ended, Likert Scale, and fixed- choice response questions was developed based upon program objectives and related studies that were identified.

Section I of the questionnaire uses open ended, and fixed choice response questions to measure factors relating to questions most frequently asked in the interview, and factors that influenced student preparation for their interview.

Section II of the study questionnaire uses Likert Scale response questions to measure perception of the level of accomplishment in seven skill areas identified as important in the review of related literature.

Monson in a 1977 study of the impact of career planning services at Pitzer, Scripps, and Pomona Colleges used a measure of services used and perceived level of helpfulness to assess student perceptions of the quality and usefulness of career planning services.[23] Section III of the study questionnaire was modeled after the response method used in this study.

Section IV uses primarily open ended questions to measure qualitative information relating to suggestions for improving program services. Two fixed choice questions were also used to measure student perception of preparedness for the interview they have completed and for interviewing situations in general.

Good recommends that," every questionnaire be pre-tested before use to insure clarity and validity and be revised accordingly." [24]

Revisions were made to the questionnaire after its initial development through consultation with the acting director of CPPC and the sponsoring course professor.

Following these initial revisions, the questionnaire was pretested by six students during the week of November 5-9, 1984. After the pre-testing of the questionnaire, the same consultation process was used. This resulted in some additional revisions to the study instrument.

The questionnaire was then prepared for duplicating. Englehart makes the point that, "an attractive questionnaire is much more likely to receive a good response than one that is unappealing."[25] Englehart advocates the following considerations in the preparation of a survey instrument:

"1) the questionnaire should have a heading which includes an institutional designation and a title;

2) blanks should be provided for the respondent to fill in background data;

3) the questions should be spaced with care leaving room for written responses; and

4) letter size paper (8-1/2 x 11 inches) is recommended."[26]

Consideration was given to the paper size and the decision was

made to reduce the type size in order to reproduce the questionnaire on 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper. In an attempt to not scare off possible respondents because of the questionnaire's length, and for economic reasons it was decided to print the four-page questionnaire in a two-sided back to back format.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Hypothesis #1 - Students who have used services of the Career Planning and Placement Center will identify those services as having a positive effect on their feelings of preparedness for their on-campus interview(s).

Analysis - Question #7, Section II and Questions #1-10, Section III yielded the following results illustrated in Table 1.1 and 1.2.

Hypothesis #1 is accepted. 71.7% of students using CPPC services strongly agreed or agreed that the center's programs helped to prepare them for their on-campus interview.

Of the specific services of CPPC these students actually used, in all cases respondents identified the services as being very helpful or somewhat helpful greater than 75% of the time.

TABLE 1.1
(N=46)

Sec. II, Q7 "I felt the Career Planning and Placement Center's programs (workshops, meetings with counselors, career handouts) helped to prepare me for this interview."

	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Strongly Agree & Agree Combined %
Strongly Agree	11	23.9%	
Agree	22	47.8%	
Unsure	11	23.9%	
Disagree	1	2.2%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0	
No Response	1	2.2%	
TOTAL	46	100%	71.7

TABLE 1.2
(N=46)

SECTION III. Please indicate the Career Planning and Placement services you have used and how helpful you feel they were.

	NR	No	Yes →	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Unsur-	NR	Combined Freq. VH & SH	Combined Total Percent
1. I attended a campus interviewing orientation.	2	2	42	15	25	0	0	2	40	95.2
2. I have read career materials such as current magazines, resume and job strategy books.	2	16	28	14	12	0	0	2	26	92.9
3. I have met with a counselor at the Center.	3	29	14	6	6	2	0	0	12	85.7
4. I used the Job Hunter's Guide and/or resume resource planning handouts.	3	5	38	19	16	1	0	2	35	92.1
5. I used company information materials.	2	3	41	23	17	0	0	1	40	97.6
6. I used the resume critique service.	4	7	35	24	9	1	0	1	33	94.3
7. I attended the interviewing techniques workshop.	4	22	20	8	10	1	1	0	18	90.0
8. I attended a resume writing workshop.	5	25	16	8	8	0	0	0	16	100.0
9. I attended a second interviews workshop.	4	38	4	1	2	0	1	0	3	75.0
10. Other (specify) How To Get a Job Workshop 45			1	1					1	100.0

Hypothesis #2 - Students attending the CPPC Resume Planning and Writing Workshop will feel they had an effective resume for their on-campus interview.

Analysis - Results from question #5, Section II and question #8, Section III yielded the following information illustrated in Table 2.1.

Hypothesis #2 is rejected. While this hypothesis was rejected the findings may be inconclusive. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents who attended a resume workshop responded that they "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had a resume which was effective. The ability to apply the concepts covered in the resume workshop is a proxy measure for the effectiveness of the workshop in helping to prepare students for interviews. The inability of students to perceive their resume as effective or to develop an effective resume does not conclusively indicate the CPPC Resume Workshop is ineffective.

TABLE 2.1
(N=16)

Responses of students who attended a resume planning and writing workshop regarding how effective their resumes were in their interviews.

Category of Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Combined Percentage of SA & A Category
Strongly Agreed	6	37.5	
Agreed	5	31.3	68.8
Unsure	4	25.0	
Disagree	0	0	
Strongly Disagree	0	0	
No Repsonse	1	6.2	
TOTAL	16	100	68.8

Hypothesis #3 - The CPPC Interview Techniques Workshop is an effective aid in preparing students for their on-campus interview.

Analysis - Question #7 in Section III which indicates attendance at a CPPC Interviewing Techniques Workshop was cross-tabulated with student perceptions of their ability to exhibit nonverbal and verbal behaviors identified as important from the literature. These behaviors related to first impression, dress, communication skills, and eye contact. Table 3.1 illustrates the following results.

Hypothesis #3 is accepted. At least seventy percent of the surveyed students who attended the interviewing techniques workshop perceive that they were able to exhibit all five selected skills. This finding would suggest the Interviewing Techniques Workshop is an effective aid in preparing students for their on-campus interviews.

A comparison of student perceptions of overall preparedness for the on-campus interview completed is presented in table 3.2. Thhe table shows responses of students who attended and did not attend an interviewing techniques workshop. This table indicates that while hypothesis #3 is accepted, further study from a larger population is needed.

TABLE 3.1
(N=20)

Students who have attended an interviewing techniques workshop and strongly agree or agree that they demonstrated nonverbal and verbal skills relating to first impression, dress, communication skills, and eye contact.

Perception of Skill Exhibited	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Combined SA & A Responses
I made a good first impression in the first four minutes of the interview.	16	80.0%
I was dressed appropriately for the interview.	20	100.0%
I was able to tell the recruiter important information about myself.	15	75.0%
I was able to establish good eye contact with the recruiter in the interview.	20	100.0%
I asked good questions of the recruiter about their firm.	14	70.0%

TABLE 3.2

Comparison of students who attended an Interviewing Techniques Workshop with those who did not, and how prepared they felt for their interview.

prep level	attended	did not attend
very prepared	35%	15%
prepared	65%	80%
unprepared	0%	5
	100% (n=20)	100% (n=20)

Hypothesis #4 - Counselors of the CPPC are providing counseling that is helpful and responsive to student clients.

Analysis - Question #3 from Section III was used to measure use and student perception of the degree of helpfulness of the career counseling that student respondents received. Table 4.1 presents the results of this question. Twelve out of 14 students or 85.5% who met with a counselor identified the meeting as very helpful or somewhat helpful for them.

Hypothesis #4 is accepted.

TABLE 4.1
(N=14)

Students that have met with a counselor and found the assistance to be very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not helpful, or who were unsure.

Degree of Helpfulness of Counselor Meeting	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Percentage of Combined VH & H Respondents
Very Helpful	6	42.9%	
Somewhat Helpful	6	42.9%	85.8%
Not Helpful	2	14.2%	
Unsure	Ø	Ø	Ø
TOTAL	14	100%	85.8%

Hypothesis #5 - the more of the nine CPPC services (listed in the study questionnaire) used, the better prepared students will feel for employment interviews in general.

Analysis - Responses to question #3, Section IV measure student perceptions of preparedness for employment interviews in general. Questions #1-10 in Section III measure the number of CPPC services used. The number of services used from Section III is cross-tabulated with student perceptions of preparedness for employment interview situations in general (question #3 Section IV).

CPPC services include campus interviewing orientation, career resource materials, meeting with counselors, job hunters guide or resume planning handouts, company information, resume critique service, interviewing techniques workshop, second interview workshop, and resume writing workshop.

Results of the cross-tabulation support hypothesis #5. Hypothesis #5 is accepted. The combined percentages of students using 5 or more services resulted in 91.2% of the respondents identifying their level of preparation for employment interviews in general as "very prepared" or "prepared."

This finding may have implications in encouraging students to take advantage of as many services as possible prior to campus interviews.

TABLE 5.1
(N=34)

Students using five or more CPPC services and their perceptions of preparedness for employment interviews in general

Perceived Level of Preparedness	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Combined Percentage of VP & P Responses
Very prepared	12	35.3%	
Prepared	19	55.9%	91.2
Unprepared	0	0%	
Very Unprepared	0	0%	
Unsure	3	8.8%	
TOTAL	34	100%	91.2

TABLE 5.2
(n=11)

Students using fewer than five CPPC services and their perceptions of preparedness for employment interviews in general.

Perceived Level of Preparedness	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Combined Percentage of VP & P Responses
Very Prepared	3	27.0%	
Prepared	6	54.0%	81%
Unprepared	1	9.5%	
Very Unprepared	0	0%	
Unsure	1	9.5%	
TOTAL	11	100.0%	81%

Hypothesis #6 - Student grade point average will have no effect on the number of CPPC services used.

Analysis - Repsonses to question #6 in Section IV identify student GPA. Responses to questions #1-10 in Section III identify the number of CPPC services used. The responses to these two data sets are cross tabulated.

A Pearson's Product Moment Correlation* or "Pearson's r" was calculated to determine whether there was an association between student grade point average and the number of CPPC services used. According to Backstrom and Cesar, a correlation coeficient of less than .20 is considered "negligible" or that no association exists.[27] The correlation coefficient that was calculated from study respondents equaled .115. Thus, there was no association between student grade point average and number of services used.

The scattergram in table 6.1 indicates the wide range of responses given by the students.

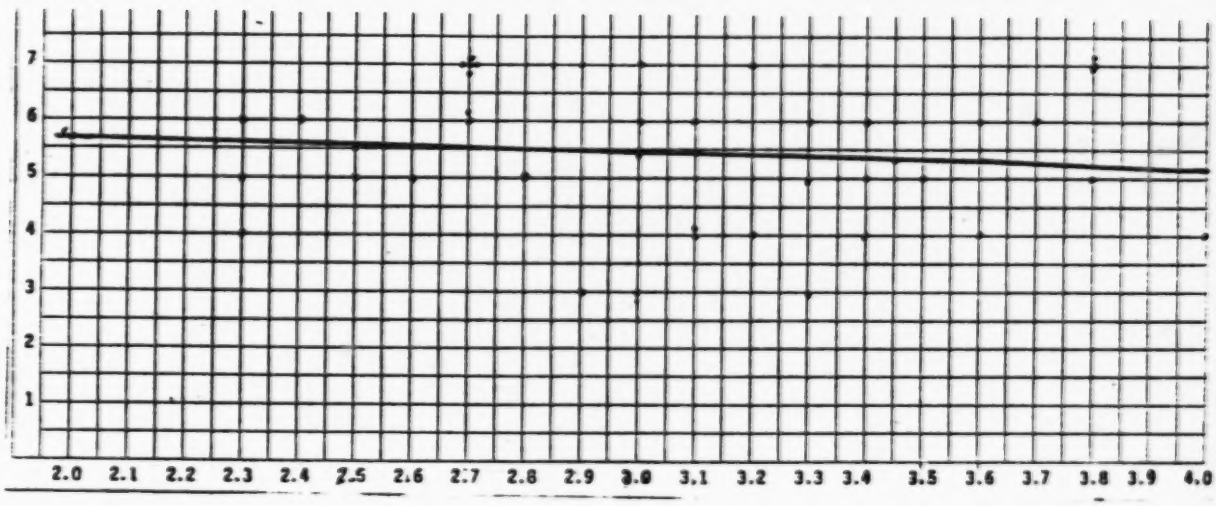
Results for hypothesis #6 are accepted.

The Pearson's Coefficient Correlation that was calculated inciateds there was no assocation between student GPA and the number of CPPC services used. Further study in phase two drawing from a larger sample population may yield differing results.

*

TABLE 6.1
(N=37)

Scattergram of self-reported GPA by the Number of CPPC Services Used.



The linear equation was calculated with the statistics given below:

Given that: $y = f(x)$, x = self-reported GPA
y = no. CPPC services used

The equation $y = a + bx$ was used where

$$a = \frac{\sum y}{n} - b\left(\frac{\sum x}{n}\right) \quad \text{and}$$

$$b = \frac{\sum xy - \frac{(\sum x)(\sum y)}{n}}{\sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{n}}$$

and $\sum x = 113.8$, $\sum y = 200$, $\sum xy = 613.3$, $\sum x = 357.91$, $\sum y = 1140$.

Hypothesis #7 - Students who have had one or more previous on-campus interview(s) will perceive themselves as better prepared for their present on-campus interview because of the maturation effect.

Analysis - Question #2 in Section IV measures student perceptions of their overall preparation for the on-campus interview just completed. Question #3 from Section I identifies if students have had any previous on-campus interviews. The results of the cross tabulation of these two data sets is presented in Table 7.1.

Hypothesis #7 is accepted. The results indicated that the majority of students who felt prepared or very prepared had had at least one previous on-campus interview.

TABLE 7.1

Contingency table of student perception of preparedness for their on-campus interview between respondents who had no previous interview experience and those who had at least one previous interview.

	No Previous Interview		At Least One Previous	
	No.	%	No.	%
Very Prepared	1	16.7	9	22.5
Prepared	3	50.0	28	70.0
Unprepared	1	16.7	0	0.0
Very Unprepared	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not Sure	1	16.7	1	2.5
No Response	0	0.0	2	5.0
	n=6	100.0	n=40	100.0

Hypothesis #8 - Factors other than the direct services of the CPPC were responsible for students' perceptions of preparedness for their on-campus interviews.

Analysis - Responses to question #11 in Section II identify students who feel factors other than CPPC services helped them to prepare for their on-campus interviews.

Hypothesis #8 is accepted. Table 8.1 indicates that 63.1% of all study respondents felt that factors other than the services of CPPC were responsible for their preparation for their on-campus interviews. Since the wording of this question and hypothesis does not make it mutually exclusive with services of CPPC, it is logical.

Tables 8.2 and 8.3 illustrate the other influences that also influenced their interview preparation.

TABLE 8.1

(N=46)

"Factors other than services of the Career Planning and Placement Center helped me to prepare for this interview."

Type of Response	Number of Respondents	Percentages of Respondents
Strongly Agree	6	13.1
Agree	23	50.0
Unsure	12	26.1
Disagree	3	6.5
Strongly Disagree	0	0
No Response	2	4.3
TOTAL	46	100.0%

TABLE 8.2
(N=46)

"Factors other than CPPC that helped me to prepare for this interview"

Preparation Factor	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
Interview Experience	7	15.2%
Previous Work Experience	6	13.1%
My Family	2	4.4%
Friends	6	13.1%
Talking with People Employed in That Job Field	6	13.1%
Reading Study Questionnaire	1	2.2%
IBUS 490 Course	3	6.5%
Other Coursework	1	2.2%
Readings From Sources Other Than CPPC	5	10.9%
Involvement in Campus Organizations	1	2.2%
Other	11	24.0%
Talking with People Going Through Interviews	4	8.7%
No Response	14	30.4%

*responses in more than one category so percentages total more than 100.0%

TABLE 8.3
(N=46)

"What things have helped you
to prepare for this interview?"

Preparation Factor	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents*
CPPC Workshops		
CIO, Intv. Tech, 2nd Inter.	9	19.6
Previous Interview Experience	12	26.1
Past Job Experience	2	4.4
Read Crib Sheet & CPPC Company Materials	11	24.0
IBUS 490 Course	7	15.2
Moody's Corporate Record	1	2.2
Talked with Friends	4	8.7
Talked with Previous Employers	2	4.4
Talk with CPPC Staff	1	2.2
Prepared Answers to Commonly Asked Questions	2	4.4
How to Get a Job Workshop	1	2.2
Nothing	1	2.2
Feeling of Self-Confidence	3	6.5
CPPC Handouts	1	2.2
No Response	8	17.4

*responses in more than one category so percentages total more than 100.0%

SUMMARY

Preparation for employment beyond academic training that colleges and universities provide is an important skill most students must acquire. One problem of this study was to determine student perceptions of the factors that were significant in their preparation for on-campus interviews. A second problem was to determine student perceptions of the helpfulness of CPPC services that they received in their preparation for on-campus interviews.

A study questionnaire consisting of four parts was developed. Part I asked for background information and qualitative responses about their interview. Part II asked for Likert Scale responses to interviewing skills and some CPPC services. Part III asked for identification of specific CPPC services used and the degree of helpfulness they provided. Part IV asked for qualitative information on overall preparedness for interviewing and suggestions to improve CPPC services.

Students were encouraged to complete a study questionnaire immediately following an on-campus interview. Forty-six questionnaires were completed from a sample population of 250 for a return rate of 18.5%.

Eight hypotheses were identified to measure student perception relating to: positive effect of CPPC services, CPPC resume writing and interviewing techniques workshop, career counseling, student GPA, interview experience, and factors other than CPPC services that were responsible for preparedness for on-campus interviews.

Guidelines for analysis of hypotheses is listed in the Data Analysis and Discussion section of this paper. Table 9.1 describes the findings related to the testing of the hypotheses.

TABLE 9.1

Summary of Findings Related to Tested Hypotheses

Tested Hypotheses	Accepted	Rejected	Inconclusive
Students who have used services of CPPC identify those services as having a positive effect on their feelings of preparedness for their on-campus interview(s).	X		
Students attending the CPPC resume writing workshop feel they had an effective resume for their on-campus interview(s).		X	
The CPPC Interviewing Techniques Workshop is an effective aid in preparing students for their on-campus interview(s).	X		
Counselors of the CPPC are providing counseling that is helpful and responsive to student clients.	X		
The more of the nine CPPC services used the better prepared students will feel for employment interviews in general.	X		
Student GPA will have no effect on the number of CPPC services used.	X		
Students who have had one or more previous on-campus interview(s) will perceive themselves as better prepared for their present on-campus interview because of the maturation effect.	X		
Factors other than the direct services of the CPPC were responsible for students' perceptions of preparedness for their on-campus interview.	X		

INDICATIONS

The size of the study sample precludes the ability of the author to draw any definitive conclusions. However, the data and information gathered through this study provide a number of meaningful indications.

1. Students that have used services of the Career Planning and Placement Center found them to have had a positive effect on their feelings of preparedness for their on-campus interview(s).

2. Students attending a resume planning and writing workshop may perceive it as helpful but, may not be able to apply the concepts taught.

3. The CPPC Interviewing Techniques Workshop appears to be perceived as an effective aid in preparing students for on-campus interviews.

4. The counseling that CPPC is providing students appears to be helpful and responsive to student clients.

5. Students using five or more CPPC services appear to feel better prepared for employment interviews in general than those who did not.

6. On the basis of this study, there is no association between student GPA and the level of placement center services students use.

7. Students who have had at least one previous on-campus interview appear to perceive themselves as better prepared for their present on-campus interview because of the experience they gained.

8. Factors other than the direct services of the CPPC appear to be an influence in students' perceptions of preparation for their on-campus interviews.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Information obtained from this study, a review of the related literature, a comparison of related research, and the analysis of data suggest the following recommendations and policy implications.

1. Further research of student perceptions of CPPC services and further testing of this study's hypotheses tested in this study are needed. More formal research should be conducted in the spring semester 1985 to gather additional student feedback on the on-campus interviewing and career preparation services program. Research drawn from a larger and more diversified survey population should be conducted. A larger sample size relative to the population should yield results from which more definitive conclusions can be drawn. The diversification of the sample population should help to provide a better representation of student opinion of CPPC services beyond those of predominantly business and computer science majors.

2. Consideration should be given to developing formal written minimum standards for CPPC workshops. Currently informal standards or items that"should be covered" are reasonably consistent among CPPC professional staff. However, the absence of any formal guidelines on minimum topics to be covered leaves room for the possibility of inconsistent information being given to students because of differing values or experiences of each workshop leader. In no way does this recommendation attempt to imply that the style or creativity of workshop leaders should be eliminated. This recommendation only suggests that the basic

topics or minimum standards for topics that will be covered for each workshop be formalized in writing. This should provide for consistent coverage of topics deamed "important" in workshops, no matter who the workshop leader is.

3. Consideration should be given to establishment of formal written objectives for career preparation programs. By formalizing objectives, evaluation of student feedback and review of program performance can be facilitated. The presence of formal objectives will also result in development of criteria upon which periodic evaluation and program review can be based. There are several benefits to this course of action; 1) users of CPPC services can make staff aware of changes in service mix that are needed or desired; 2) evaluation based on established standards builds a strong case for justifying program activities to other constituencies; 3) through the establishment of formal objectives, meaningful time series data can be generated relating to quantitative and qualitative issues surrounding services that will be offered over the years.

4. Development of a mock interview workshop or program should be explored.

5. Installation of a bottled water dispenser in SP 333 waiting area should be explored.

6. Presentation of programs by professionals from industry here at NIU to speak on their perspectives of recruiting and other career related topics should be explored.

7. Inclusion of an actual thank you letter example in the Job Hunters Guide should be considered.

8. A study should be conducted to determine the level of mastery of concepts taught at CPPC resume writing and interviewing techniques workshops.

9. A study should be conducted to determine perceptions of students from all colleges on-campus concerning their career preparation needs.

10. Since the study did not determine if the more interviews a student has the better prepared they will feel, a similar study should be conducted to determine if the "more is better" method of preparation can be supported.

Table 10.1 also includes the summary of responses of students making suggestions to improve the CPPC on-campus interviewing program.

TABLE 10.1
(N=22)

"What suggestions can you make to
improve the on-campus interviewing program?"

-None, it's an excellent program
-It's pretty good right now
-None; service fine as it stands
-Have more workshops
-More material on companies
-At the beginning of the semester SP333 was very hot. Keep better track of room temperature
-None at moment
-More indepth analysis of interview techniques
-Pretty good at present
-Make interviews longer
-Already very efficient
-Get more companies to recruit at NIU
-Put a water cooler in SP 333 - it would be greatly appreciated while waiting for an interview
-Small Group "sample" interview would be a helpful interviewing orientation
-Try and have a broader range of recruiters from areas other than accounting and computer science
-Be very specific about what majors recruiters are looking for
-The resume critique service is a needed one. However, upon returning with different types of resumes and talking to different people who had their own ideas of how a resume should be constructed, the service turned into a center of frustration. Pick one or two models of resumes to go by and critique resumes based solely on these choosen models.
-You should have a role-playing situation and ask questions that are normally asked by employers
-The job hunters' guide could include an example or two of both cover letters and thank you letters. Just being told what goes into the letter is not as meaningful as being shown an example
-get more companies to come to NIU and get professionals from industry to give realistic lectures on what they expect from an employee. What they like to see from the start of an interview and what they don't like. I want to know more about salary averages in the various fields open to finance majors.
-I was forced to wait a half hour because the person before me was asking too many questions! State in workshops don't waste the recruiters time and cause other students to be off schedule.

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APPENDICES